/Chinese Moslems (Dungans)/

4. Customs

S N 563 779 782 [793] a. Religious rites

According to religious rules, the Moslems are supposed to pray five times daily (sunrise, noon, afternoon, sunset and midnight), facing in the direction of Mecca. Few of the Chinese Moslems besides the Mullahs and Ahungs adhere strictly, but pray only once or twice a day. To be valid, prayers should be performed in the mosque, but those who find it impossible to go to the mosques may pray wherever they are. The call to prayer (adhan) is made by the Ahung, or religious leader, and the believers join in saying the adhan. Daily noon prayer is popular, and the Friday service is the most fully attended.

S N [562]

Public worship cannot be performed by fewer than four persons. Women may not attend the mosques where the men pray. In some places, women have their own mosques and women Ahung to direct the prayers and Friday services. Women always worship as individuals and not as a congregation, though there may be a number of women gathered together.

S N 563 779 782 783

The Moslems must be clean when they attend any religious ceremony. Hands and face must be washed, and bathing before worship is common. For this reason all mosques of importance have bathing places annexed. The Moslem becomes unclean by touching such objects as dishes containing pork or any meat not killed according to ritual, pigs, dogs, wine or excrement.

S N 563 779 782 785 779 [203]

The thirty-day fast of Ramadan is fairly strictly observed. During this period one is not to eat between sunrise and sunset, and such things as smoking, drinking and sexual contact are also forbidden. In many places, a messenger goes about the Moslem quarters calling out the times for observing or breaking the fast, lest someone oversleep or fail to prepare and eat the necessary food before daybreak. The end of the fast is celebrated by a feast.

The aged, ill, insane, travelers, women who are pregnant, menstruating or nursing, persons doing heavy labor or whose lives are in danger are excused from the fast, but if or when they are able they must make up for it. The purpose of the fast is to help the believers maintain pure and pious lives. Fasting is considered meritorious at other times too, except on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

S N 563 553 852 [788]

b. Naming

Within seven days after the birth of a child, he must be given a Koranic name, or Ching-ming (religious name). For this occasion a feast is prepared, and the poor are fed. If the child is a male and the family wealthy enough, two sheep are killed for the occasion. If the child is a girl, only one sheep is killed. To arrive at the name, the father holds the child with its face toward Mecca and repeats a prayer in one ear of the child, then

/The New Uighurs/

563 764 [793] come to have one last glimpse of the deceased. Tradition forbids a woman to look upon the face of a dead man, a tradition seldom observed now, but no man, not even the husband, may look at the face of a dead woman.

[184] Among the poor, funeral services take place on the second day in summer, the third in winter. The wealthy delay burial until the third or fourth day to allow time for the relatives to assemble.

No coffin is used. The body is carried in a felt, placed on a [793] stretcher and covered with a white sheet. After a mullah reads [783] a prayer of absolution, four men lift the stretcher and the mourners proceed to the graveyard. Relatives and friends walk in front of the stretcher, the Mullahs behind. Women accompany the procession for a short distance, but never to the grave.

[191] The rites of burial, the position in which the body is placed and the covering of the grave are similar to those of the Kirghiz. 563 764 782 After the mullahs have prayed over the covered grave, the mourners go to the house of a relative where all pray for the deceased. This ceremony is performed in another house because [784] no fire may be made nor food cooked for three days in a house in which death has occurred. The rich perform the post-interment prayers in a tent erected next to the grave, and mullahs [184] are engaged to read the Koran for a time varying, with the family's social and financial position, from seven to forty days.

563 765 Traditionally, close relatives of the deceased, both rich and poor, mourn for forty days after the funeral. They wear black or white robes with white sashes, and the sons of the deceased do not shave their heads.

[782] Three days after death, prayer is said in the home of the deceased. The same kind of prayer, for the redemption of the dead person's sins, is said on the twentieth day after death, and again on the fortieth. On the fortieth day after the death, a close friend of the deceased invites the sons to his home, removes their mourning robes and shaves their heads. The last prayer is offered on the first anniversary of the death.

f. Etiquette and manners

563 562 576 Among most of the New Uighurs who respect the Moslem tradition, it is the women who keep up the prescribed standard of etiquette. In the presence of guests, it is customary for the wife to rise when her husband enters the room, and go and sit near the threshold until the husband seats himself. Also, to hand him anything she must rise, and offer it with both hands. Women always wear some sort of headgear when they eat. This does not mean that the women of Sinkiang are treated as slaves by their husbands. In general they enjoy considerable independence compared with women in other Moslem countries.

563 576 Relations between the New Uighurs are characterized by

/The New Uighurs/

563 576 mutual courtesy. In addressing one another they use the polite form of you. The same politeness is demonstrated between wife and husband. Parents use the equivalent of "thou" to address their children, servants or workers. Upon meeting a friend or entering a friend's house they say "As-salam Alaikum," and the reply is "Alaikum as-salam." They inquire about the health of the family, then bow and shake hands. Only women kiss when they meet, and only if they are related. When they part they say "Khosh," or "Allah Akbar," meaning, "The Lord is great."

563 576 574 264 [782] The more religious women pray before eating or starting to do something. Washing the hands before and after meals is mandatory. Bowls of water and towels are provided at a feast or banquet table, and hands are washed between courses. When a hostess serves refreshments to a guest, the guest rises, bows and says "Ishqallah," meaning thank you. Polite speeches are made by both host and guest on the guest's arrival and departure. Good manners are regarded as important.

4. Superstitions and taboos

563 771 [776] [778] [769] The New Uighurs attach superstition to almost everything. They believe in witches, ghosts, charms and talismans. As mentioned before, they believe in the powers of local saints and heroes, to whom they have dedicated innumerable shrines, and certain superstitions connect these shrines with the curing of disease and the bearing of children. Ancestor worship is also strong among them, as shown by the popular names of the shrines.

[756] [755] [789] 563 771 775 [782] [825] The people are also firm believers in witch-doctors, and in magic powers that cure disease, induce love, or sow enmity between people. Ghosts are much feared, especially the ghost of a Chinese. People regard the Urumchi Road from Kashgar as a haunt for Chinese ghosts. They believe that if one is haunted he may be able to propitiate the ghosts by leaving money on his doorstep overnight. If the money is gone in the morning, the ghosts have taken it and will make no further trouble. They also have a superstitious dread of snakes, and believe that if one kills a snake, its mate will haunt him.

563 372 [777] 563 821 The New Uighurs try to maintain an everlasting fire in their fireplaces, to bring prosperity to the house. Ashes from the fireplace are carried out at night or before sunrise, for to clean the fireplace and take out the ashes during the day may bring misfortune to the household. They fear thunder, and during a thunderstorm they pray for deliverance from threatening danger.

5. Religious celebrations and festivals

563 796 Like the festivals of Moslems the world over, the festivals of the New Uighurs are deeply colored with religious influence. Besides Fridays, which are generally celebrated, the people have only three main holidays, Rōse-häyt, Kurban-häyt and

/The New Uighurs/

563 Yengi-Yil (New Year).
796 Rõse-häyt, a solemn holiday, is celebrated in the ninth month according to the Moslem calendar, and lasts three days. The
[785] holidays follow the thirty days of Rõse fast, which resembles the Ramadan fast discussed previously. During the three days, everyone stops work and visits friends and relatives. In each
[594] household, guests are served meats, boiled eggs, fruits, all
[262] kinds of cakes and sweets, and tea.

Kurban-häyt is also a three-day holiday. On the first day, the orthodox go to the mosques at sunrise and pray for two
[184] hours. After they return to their homes, every adult male in a
[782] rich family kills a sheep. Among the poor, only the head of the
[775] house kills a sheep. These sheep are sacrificed to Allah, who, they believe, will make their journey to the Garden of Eden easier after they die. Then there is celebration and feasting. Musicians play all day long in the streets and bazaars, while both men and women dance.

Yengi-Yil, the New Year, begins with the first lunar month, and is also celebrated for three days. No services are performed in the mosques at this time. Musicians play, and there are singing, dancing and feasting throughout the community. It is the custom for women to sing on swings constructed for the occasion in the bazaar.

563 Nazara is a celebration observed by the wealthy in connection
796 with weddings, birth and circumcision. The host holds open
184 house for his friends, and gives bread and meat to the poor. As the rich are enjoying the host's hospitality, the poor are clus-
[735] tering at his gate awaiting the distribution of food. Each receives a large loaf of bread and a slice of meat, and is expected to call down the blessings of Allah upon the benefactor. The hospitality and charity extended by the host are considered to enhance his merit.

6. Leisure, music and dancing

563 When the crops are gathered and the field work is completed,
517 both men and women like to visit the bazaars in the neighboring
533 towns. They go for the entertainment, and for the news and gos-
535 sip circulating in the bazaar. The well-to-do give evening parties for their friends and relatives, and always there is an orchestra at the party, to play for singing and dancing. According to custom, only two persons dance at a time. They dance slowly and smoothly, with no quick or lively movements. Their dancing is very graceful, but monotonous. Party refreshments are cold meats, pastries, fruits and tea.

563 Although most of the New Uighurs lead a hard and humdrum
517 type of life, they become gay and animated when they sing and listen to music. They exploit every possible occasion to have a good time—weddings, birthdays, circumcisions, even ablution

/Chinese Moslems/

000 acter Hui signifying "to return."

S N 795 361 The Chinese Moslems live in small, closely knit communities, organized around the mosques. The Moslem community is usually set apart from the general Chinese community. The Moslems may form a whole village, or a certain suburb or section of town. The communities are organized on a local basis and there is no higher religious authority that unites all the communities. The mosques, the religious and social centers of the Moslem communities, are maintained independently.

S N 795 182 At least ostensibly, the religious attitude of the Chinese Moslims is characterized by moderation. They make concessions to the ruling power, hoping thus to gain security for person and property. The more capable and resolute of those who enter into government service take part in the ceremonial of the national cult.

S N 795 794 [346] The Moslems in the Northwest do not publicly practice their religion, nor do they advertise it. In some cases their mosques are dissimulated, so that they cannot be distinguished easily from other houses in the village. They are quite lax in their observances of the different rituals connected with Islam. The Chinese Moslems do not regularly attend religious services in the mosque. Aside from the ahung (the religious leader of the S N [793] Chinese Moslem community) and the extremely orthodox people they do not pray five times a day, but once or twice at most. [782] The noon service is the most popular one, and the place of worship is limited to the mosque. The manner of calling for prayer differs in China from that in Western Asia. The Muazzin does not chant the call to prayer. He stands on the roof of the mosque and shouts the invitation to prayer and may strike a special wooden instrument called ta-p'an-tzu. Most Moslems will ignore the worship time if it interferes with their daily business. Except for some minor differences, the prayer ceremony is conducted in a manner similar to that in Western Asia.

S N [562] Women are not allowed to attend the mosques where the men pray. In some of the larger communities, the women may have a mosque of their own, but in most places they worship individually.

The Friday service draws the best attendance, although certainly not all nor even the majority of believers. On this day the sermon is delivered by the Khatib, a special person, not necessarily a religious leader, elected for the purpose. It is usually in Arabic, and few of those present can understand it.

S N 795 785 794 203 [184] The Fast of Ramadan is one of the rituals which is observed with a degree of strictness in Moslem communities throughout China. In many places there are special messengers who go about the Moslem quarters calling out the times for observing and breaking the fast. Messengers also go around at night lest

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these proved to be gold-mines from which the sand, having been removed in baskets, provides a fair amount of gold-dust, after being washed out. In some places the grit on which we walked was composed of minute granite fragments of every colour, and it was very interesting to notice that the little, grey, desert lizard, which had never left us all through our travels, had so accommodated itself to the soil in which it lived that its skin had become many-hued, like a beautiful mosaic, so that it was indistinguishable from the surrounding ground.

A large temple stood on an eminence not far from the ravine, and here we found the lamas, who had been as prompt as ourselves in quitting the camp, burning incense and making obeisance to the gods. The lamas expressed some surprise that we neither burned incense nor prostrated ourselves, nor sought the blessing of the Guardians of the Road by striking the temple bell with its wooden hammer to call their attention. We were the only travellers on that road who would dare to take such a journey without observing this ritual, and such an omission must be either a sign of impiety or that we enjoyed the protection of a power superior to any god in that temple. 'We never start on our day's journey without asking the blessing of God,' explained one of our carters, who two months previously would have been as unwilling as the lamas themselves to leave without the blessing of the Goddess of Mercy.

It was fortunate for us that this first journey, taken as it was by day, was not an abnormally long one, and by 10 p.m. we reached Shachüantz—'The Spring of the Sands'—but unfortunately it surpassed all the others we had hitherto sampled for the bad quality of its water, which was metallic as well as bitter and salt. The slabs of granite over which we had driven had

I[Near Hsinghsinghsia -- Analyst]